assessment/short levy of Central Excise duties and other Central taxes during 1994-95;

(b) whether the Government enquired into these losses;

(c) if so, the details thereof and the action taken thereon;

(d) the remedial measures taken to check such revenue loss; and

(e) the number of persons arrested in the country particularly in Delhi for evading the excise duty during the last three years?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE AND MINISTER OF COMPANY AFFAIRS (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM) : (a) to (e). the information is being collected and will be laid on the Table of the House.

Drawback Claims of CBEC

1952. SHRI SURESH KALMADI : Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state :

(a) whether the working group of Central Board of Excise and Customs has submitted its recommendations to ensure speedy settlement of drawback claims;

(b) if so, the details of the recommendations; and

(c) the reaction of the Government thereon?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE AND MINISTER OF COMPANY AFFAIRS (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM) : (a) to (c). Yes, Sir. The Working Groups' Report on Disbursement of Drawback Claims has been received recently. The Groups' major recommendations include, return to [re-1986 procedure for processing of Drawback claims by doing away with the necessity of filling separate claims and treating the drawback Shipping Bills themselves as claims for drawback; reduction in drawal of samples for test; augmentation of infrasturcture of Custom House laboratories; computerisation of export and drawback procedures; changes in procedure for payment of drawback amounts and adoption of modern modes of communication.

All these recommendations are under active consideration of the Government.

[Translation]

Refinancing of Rural Banks

1953. SHRI SUKHLAL KUSHWAHA : Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state :

(a) whether the National Housing Bank has been providing refinancing facility to the rural banks of Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh for construction and repair of houses;

(b) if so, the details thereof and the amount provided during each of the last two years in that regard; and

(c) if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE AND MINISTER OF COMPANY AFFAIRS (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM) : (a) to (c). National Housing Bank (NHB) has reported that it is operating a scheme of subscription to Special Rural Housing Debentures (SRHDs) through Agricultural Rural Development Banks (ARDBs) for rural housing. NHB has been providing refinance facility to the ARDB of Uttar Pradesh in the form of subscriptions to SRHDs floated by them. NHB has reported that till date, it has subscribed an amount of Rs. 9.78 crores to ARDB of Uttar Pradesh, besides subscription to adhoc bonds of Rs. 10 crores for earthquake relief in Uttar Kashi during the year 1991-92. Further, a limit of Rs. 2 crores has been allocated to ARDB of Uttar Pradesh.

NHB has stated that no application has been received from Madhya Pradesh upto now.

Supply of Coal to Power Plants in Delhi

1954. SHRI JAI PRAKASH AGARWAL : Will the Minister of COAL be pleased to state :

(a) whether the Government have received complaints regarding irregular and poor quality of coal being supplied to the power plants in Delhi;

(b) if so, the details of the complaints received in this regard during the last three years; and

(c) the action taken or proposed to be taken by the Government to ensure regular supply of quality coal to the power plants of Delhi?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COAL (SHRIMATI KANTI SINGH): (a) to (c). The total despatches of coal to power plants in Delhi for the period April-June, 1996 were 12.04 lakh tonnes (provisional) as against a despatch of 13.08 lakh tonnes during the corresponding period last year. The despatches to power houses in Delhi had to be regulated owing to failure of power stations to make payments against current supplies of coal.

Thermal power plants, by and large, have been supplied adequate quantity and agreed quality of coal for which their boilers are designed. Generally the complaints regarding the quality of coal being supplied to the power houses relate to the presence of extraneous material in coal as also supply of over-sized coal. These complaints are examined on merit of each case and corrective action is taken to redress the grievances of the consumers.

In order to bring down the quality complaints, steps like installation of feeder breakers, segregation of stones at the time of loading of coal, better supervision and

encouraging the consumers to post their representatives at the loading point for quality loading are taken by the coal companies.

[English]

Export and Import of Restricted Items

1955. SHRI P.R. DASMUNSI : Will the Minister of COMMERCE be pleased to state:

(a) the details of items which were kept outside Open General Licence in EXIM-Policy of 1994-95 and 1995-96: and

(b) the details of items which were exported and imported mostly from the restricted items during the above period ?

THE MINISTER OF STATE OF THE MINISTRY OF COMMERCE (SHRI BOLLA BULLI RAMAIAH: (a) The current Export & Import Policy which came into being on 1st April, 1992 and is valid upto 31st, March, 1997 permits free import and export of capital goods, raw materials, intermediates, components, consumables, spares, parts, accessories, instruments and other goods except such goods which are covered by the Negative Lists of Imports or Exports or which are regulated by any other law for the time being in force. The importability and exportability of goods is specified itemwise in the ITC (HS) Classification of Export and Import Items.

(b) Items covered by Negative List of Imports or Exports are allowed to be imported or exported against specific licences or through general instructions notified in this regard. These items for export include fertilizers, dual purpose chemicals, pulses, peacock tail feathers, castor seeds etc. and for import these include Penicillin G, Rifampicin, Cars in CKD/SKD, Stallion & Broodmares, Trainer aircraft etc. The details of such licences are published in the fortnightly Exim Update, copies of which are also available in the Parliament library.

Ban of Rs. 500 Denomination in Nepal

1956. SHRI MULLAPPALLY RAMACHANDRAN : Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Government have received any representation against the ban of five hundred rupee currency notes in Nepal:

(b) if so, the reasons therefor: and

(c) the steps taken by the Indian Government thereon?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE AND MINISTER OF COMPANY AFFAIRS (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM): (a) to (c). As per existing provisions of Foreign Exchange Regulation Act (FERA), movement of Indian currency/ bank notes upto Rs. 100 denomination only is allowed between India and Nepal. It was reported by our Embassy at Nepal in October, 1993, that because of large scale movement of people between the borders, it had become almost impossible to adhere to the above instructions and as a result 500-rupee notes were freely available and were being accepted in various business transactions and even the local banks in Nepal while converting Nepalese currency into Indian currency often gave 500-rupee notes. Normally, whenever the Nepalese banks generate surplus Indian currency notes (upto Rs. 100 denomination notes) such notes are transferred to the Patna branch of Reserve Bank of India (RBI) through Nepal Rashtriya Bank (NRB). However, because of FERA restrictions, the RBI was not accepting 500-rupee notes from the Nepalese Banks. Thus, it was reported that the NRB was having a total deposit of 500-rupee notes worth Rs. 57 crores.

The matter was discussed at various points of time both through diplomatic channels and also by the Governor,RBI with Governor,NRB. Although, earlier a view had been taken that acceptance of 500-rupee notes held by NRB should not be permitted because this was violating the FERA regulations of Government of India, the matter had been reviewed and it was decided that in case the Nepalese Government issued a notification to all its Banks not to buy or sell Rs.500 notes, the matter could be reconsidered. The NRB had issued such a notification on 15th August, 1994. Hence, it was decided that as a one-time measure, the RBI would accept all the 500-rupee notes held in the NRB as on 15.8.1994.

Hence RBI had advised their Patna office to accept Rs. 500 denomination notes held by NRB as on 15-8-1994 to the extent of Rs. 57,56,10,500.

Since a number of cases of forgery of 500 rupee notes have been reported in the North East area, it is not considered appropriate to lift the present ban on movement of Rs.500 notes between India and Nepal.

UTI's Tax Saving Schemes

1957. SHRI ATAL BIHARI VAJPAYEE : Will the Minister of FINANCE be pleased to state :

(a) the amount collected by the Unit Trust of India and other financial institutions under various Tax Saving Schemes (like the Master Equity Plan) during the each of last four years:

(b) the present "Net Asset Value" and "Market Value" of these schemes;

(c) the total amount of loss involved to the investors due to the discounted value of these schemes:

(d) the steps taken by the Government to safeguard the interests of the investors:

(e) whether the investors are entitled to off-set these losses against their income; and

(f) if not, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF FINANCE AND MINISTER OF COMPANY AFFAIRS (SHRI P. CHIDAMBARAM) : (a) to (f). The information is being collected and will be laid on the Table of the House.